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Psst! Want to read a secret?

Publisher John Quirk says he'll spill a few about the CIA

By Bill Lazarus
Staff Reporter

GUILFORD — John Quirk just can't keep a secret.

"Do you know that the United States has a whole division of troops dressed up in Russian uniforms?" he asked excitedly, gesturing over his office conference table sprinkled with photographs and drawings of U.S. spy satellites and ultramodern jet planes.

"That we have pictures of every harbor in the world from above and below? That the KGB (Russian secret police) goal for the 1980s is to put 300 agents in the United States?"

There are many more secrets where those came from. And Quirk isn't planning to limit their spread to his visitors. This spring, the long-time publisher of special education books expects to produce a detailed history of the Central Intelligence Agency, complete with maps, charts, graphs and, yes, secrets.

The book is being written by former CIA agents and will include interviews with current director William Casey, former director William Colby, retired agents and experts in the field as well as details dug out of unclassified files and reports.

Much of the data was just released by the agency under the federal Freedom of Information Act and has never been published before, Quirk said.

The book, estimated to run close to 300 pages and retailing for at least \$29, is scheduled to be the first in an long-running series produced by Quirk's newest publishing venture, the Foreign Intelligence Press. Other books will examine the KGB, the FBI, the Israeli secret police, the U.S. Secret Service, Soviet military intelligence and similar organizations.

A former history teacher who started publishing materials for handicapped children in 1977,

Quirk, 39, has visions of recounting spy activities from the past 200 years in the series.

It is a mammoth undertaking, but the Chicago native is excited by the possibilities. "I made a little money in special education," he said. "This is my project now. I'm having a good time."

His new company, which will be relocated eventually in New Haven to separate itself completely from Quirk's parent firm, Special Learning Corp., conducted a marketing survey to find out if there were any interest in spies and spy history before going into production. Researchers also surveyed attitudes of junior-high-school and high-school students.

They found that the subject matter attracted enough attention to make the books feasible.

"There were also many misconceptions about the intelligence agencies, and about the CIA in particular," said Quirk, a direct, excitable man who holds a B.A. in history from DePaul University and has worked in publishing for almost 19 years.

Quirk had a few misconceptions himself at first, he said. Initially, Quirk said, he felt that foreign agents had little influence in worldwide organizations. Now, after years of travel worldwide, he believes just the opposite.

His parent company had landed contracts to publish books for the handicapped in such countries as Israel, Venezuela and England as well as for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

To service the accounts, Quirk spent much of his time abroad. While traveling, he said, he became aware of how governments and agencies were affected by Soviet agents. In particular, he was intrigued by how Soviet agents influenced United Nations decisions on policy, particularly at UNES-

CO. (He pointed out that the United States withdrew financial support for UNESCO as of Jan. 1, because, the government claimed, of "political shifts" within the agency.)

That interest expanded to include all intelligence gathering. Checking libraries, Quirk found that most books on intelligence agencies were "negative, exposes," he said. Those that weren't were "sensationalized, glamorous."

Not his book. "I have no axe to grind," Quirk insisted. Instead, the Guilford resident decided to produce a "coffee-table size history" appropriate as a textbook or for the general public.

Because of the recent release of the previously classified documents, the descriptions of CIA-related events of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s will be as complete as possible, Quirk claimed. Episodes in the 1980s will be sketchy, however, because much of that data is still classified and unavailable.

The intelligence agency has cooperated with the book's authors, Quirk said, a less-than-surprising development since the book will be unabashedly pro-CIA. That's to counter the common impression that, somehow, intelligence gathering is wrong, Quirk said.

"Most of the media has focused on the abuses," he said. His book, instead, will examine the agency's goals. It will start with the beginning of American intelligence gathering in the 1700s, advance to the founding of the CIA in the late 1940s and conclude with a look at current activities.

Any misdeeds will not be ignored, Quirk claimed. "I think we'll bring out everything," he said.

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